

Eliminating Junk Mail from Your Life

<http://www.dmachoice.org> charges consumers \$1 to remove their names from its members' mailing lists. Direct Mail Association members are required to use this list.

https://www.directmail.com/directory/mail_preference/ is a Do Not Mail list offered free to consumers by the direct mail industry

OptOutPrescreen.com or call 1-888-5OptOut (1-888-567-8688) to opt-out of credit card and insurance offers for five years or permanently (free)

<http://www.catalogchoice.org> is a free service offered by a nonprofit organization that allows consumers to eliminate individual catalogs they no longer wish to receive.

(<http://www.proquo.com>) is a free, comprehensive service that lets you choose which junk mail to stop from many sources, from credit card offers to marketing lists to ValPak envelopes to catalogs. (In some cases, you may have to print out a form or visit an individual company's site to opt out.)

Don't want to do it yourself? You can pay a company from \$20-\$40 per year to remove you from lists for 5 years. Companies such as <http://www.greendimes.com/> and <http://www.41pounds.org/> donate a percentage of their profits to projects that reduce carbon emissions, such as planting trees. The Green Dimes Web site also provides free DIY information for reducing junk mail. Register at no charge on their website and get a tree planted on your behalf.

Some useful tips for avoiding junk mail in the first place

- Avoid placing your address on surveys and raffles. If you do, write "Please do not sell or distribute my information, nor add to mailing lists."
- It is not necessary to send in warranty cards or "register" a warranty for the warranty to be valid, regardless of what the card may state.
- When filling out forms online, read privacy policies and check opt-out boxes.
- Mail-order businesses, especially printing houses that print checks, return address labels, and stationery, often sell their customers' addresses. When you order from them, ask that your personal information not be shared.
- To identify who's selling your information, intentionally misspell a name on a survey form or magazine subscription and keep a record of this. You'll know who sold your name and can ask them not to.
- Request that your name be eliminated from the county tax database. Many companies target specific areas based on neighborhoods and home values.

Caveat: These services take from 4-12 weeks to take effect. They do not deal with mailings from nonprofit organizations such as schools, charities, political parties and religious groups. Contact these individually to be removed from their lists. For some mail addressed to "occupant" or "resident" you may also need to write directly to the source.